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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 000430

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [MOPS](#) [ER](#) [ET](#)
SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA URGES UNSC ACTION AGAINST ERITREA OVER
UNMEE RESTRICTIONS

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

Summary

1. (SBU) Ethiopian State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Tekeda Alemu, called in the Ambassadors representing the member states on the UN Security Council on February 19 to urge immediate UN action against Eritrea in response to restrictions on UNMEE troop relocation. Noting that Eritrea's restrictions on UN operations are unprecedented, Tekeda called on the Ambassadors to sway their respective delegations in New York to consider some type of action against Eritrea to underscore that no member state can limit UN operations or dishonor UN troops. Ambassadors, including UNMEE Ambassador Ennifar, did note that Eritrea's actions pose serious problems for future UN operations, the safety of the current contingent of Jordanian and Indian forces, and that the issue at hand is no longer the border dispute but the integrity of the United Nations. A separate meeting at UNMEE Headquarters highlighted the challenge posed by Eritrea's actions and the general consensus by the diplomatic community that strong action is in order to protect the safety of the UN troops. End Summary.

A Call for Action

2. (SBU) Ethiopian State Minister Tekeda Alemu told the Ambassadors representing the UN Security Council that the restrictions posed by Eritrea over the past two years on UNMEE operations are unprecedented. Eritrea's actions have set a precedent which would allow other countries in the future to restrict UN operations. No member state, Tekeda stated, can be allowed to limit or restrict UN operations and PKO troops because it will undercut the effectiveness of the United Nations. Hinting at future operations, such as in Darfur and Chad, Tekeda said countries hosting UN peacekeepers could look at Eritrea's actions and impose similar or harsher restrictions.

3. (SBU) Tekeda reminded the Ambassadors that the safety of the Jordanian and Indian troops are at stake. He noted that Eritrea is not allowing heavy equipment to be transported from the border to Asmara, it remains unclear if the troops would be allowed to depart Eritrea, and it is also far from certain that the troops would be allowed to take their personal weapons and gear. If this humiliation of UN troops is not adequately met by the UN Security Council,

Tekeda warned that India and Jordan as well as other troop contributing countries may not participate in future peacekeeping operations. Tekeda noted Ethiopia,s prominence in peacekeeping operations. (Note: Ethiopia is preparing 1,500 troops for Darfur and currently participates in peacekeeping operations in Liberia and Cote d,Ivoire and have participated in Burundi operatioins. End Note).

14. (SBU) Tekeda did not specify what type of action should be taken against Eritrea, but underscored that a tough message must be sent to President Isaias. Tekeda added that the issue at hand is no longer the border dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea, but the integrity of the United Nations, its ability to protect and ensure the safety and honor of UN troops serving in difficult and dangerous places. A timid response or failure to act decisively will send the wrong message and jeopardize future UN operations.

Separate Meeting at UNMEE Highlights Problems

15. (C) At a separate meeting of Ambassadors on February 18 at UNMEE Headquarters, Ambassador Ennifar noted to Ambassadors interested in the border issue that Eritrea had levied restrictions that included banning of helicopter flights to monitor the border, forbidding nationals from the U.S. and other countries from serving in UNMEE in Eritrea, occupation of the Temporary Security Zone in violation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement of 2000, and other limitations on UNMEE operations. These restrictions are unprecedented. The Ambassadors noted that the issue before the Security Council is no longer the border dispute, but preserving the integrity of the United Nations.

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16. (C) Ennifar noted that Eritrea was forbidding APCs and other heavy equipment from leaving UNMEE locations along the border for Asmara, though troops were headed for Asmara. He also said it was unclear if Eritrea would allow troops to depart Asmara. Ennifar stated that it is up to the UN Security Council to determine if and when the Jordanian and Indian troops can depart Asmara and if they are to return to their respective countries or relocate to another country.

Comment

17. (C) While we defer to Embassy Asmara for their analysis, it is clear that President Isaias continues to use UNMEE as a means to &punish8 the UN for not taking his demand that Ethiopia be &condemned8 for not fully implementing the decision of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission. From the GOE, Ambassadors in Ethiopia and UN representatives, the general consensus is that Eritrea has exceeded the actions it can take to make its point on the border dispute. The issue is now not the border, but safety of the troops and preserving the United Nations, right to determine and implement operations and peacekeeping operations. End Comment.

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